



## Not getting home tonight



16 0 1

### Chapter 1 by Tim Starry

Bang!

Tire blowout. Wrestle with the steering wheel as he lets his foot off the pedal. *Don't overcontrol* he reminds himself. Ease on over to the shoulder. Let the car slow down, then gently brake.

He sits for a few seconds, taking deep calming breaths, before turning the engine off. That inner voice does a *I told you so. You should have stopped to get the tire fixed after that last flat.* Two flats in one night. Can't be chance. And both on the front tires? Something wrong with his car. *Yup, should have stopped.*

He opens the door and steps out into the chill Arizona desert night. Out in the middle of nowhere, late at night. He's not an early adopter, so no cell phone. No big deal because there isn't a cell tower within 90 miles anyway. He digs into the glove box for the emergency CB radio. Checks the battery, punches the on button. Nada. Zip. Nothing. Nobody on this lone stretch of highway.

As he returns the useless CB back to its storage he hears the coyotes start to sing. He glances up at the night sky. Lots of stars. *See more of Story Wars* *ization. Now what?*

He turns and stares south. *He turns and stares north. Screwed is what.* He turns back south and sees headlights in the distance.

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It takes some time for the vehicle to get to him. The Firebird with Mexican plates slows and then stops. The window rolls down and a heavily accented voice asks, "need a ride?"

He replies yes and the passenger opens the door for him to get in the back. "My spare is flat, need to get to the next town for a tow and fix."

"No problem. We take you."

He gets in the car and they head north. The driver and his buddy converse in Spanish between nervous glances back at their new passenger. That's when he notices their car is riding low in the back. They are carrying something very heavy. And they are nervous.

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